

ON GRACE AND PREDESTINATION OF GOD, AND ON THE FREE WILL OF MAN

CONTROVERSY I

What is Sanctifying Grace?

Orthodox View: The grace of God is understood very broadly and, in some sense, abusively, to mean any benefit from God, even natural benefits, insofar as they are unearned. Properly speaking, grace primarily refers to supernatural goods in the Scriptures. In this sense, grace first signifies God's active love, that is, His benevolence and gratuitous love as the source, and secondarily, the gift that flows from this source. Therefore, sanctifying grace, which makes one acceptable to God, can refer to either the favor of God itself or the gift derived from that favor. In this sense, grace given freely is a general term for sanctifying grace taken in the latter sense, and for grace freely given specifically. Refer above to Chapter 1 of this volume, Controversy 2. Otherwise, grace freely given, strictly speaking, is opposed to sanctifying grace. Based on this foundation, grace is to be distinguished as either eternal or temporal. Eternal or proposing grace is the decree of communicating grace in Christ to us. This is also called sanctifying and justifying grace. Temporal or executing grace is offered in time, though it can itself be eternal. It can be either grace freely given, such as spiritual gifts ordered toward the salvation of others (like the gift of tongues, prophecy, etc.), or sanctifying and justifying grace, which can be either permanent (such as faith) or transient (such as a special act of God, either sufficient and general, by which a person can convert if not hindered by themselves, or efficacious and special, by which a person is converted). This grace in the beginning of conversion is called operating grace; in the progress of conversion, it is called cooperating grace. Both sufficient and efficacious grace are prevenient, that is, they precede and excite, and are also subsequent, that is, they accompany the excited person.

Bellarmin: Sanctifying grace, which justifies, is the passive love of God, by which He is loved by us, that is, a quality inhering in us subjectively. For it is said that the love of God is poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5). This grace is compared to a fountain of water springing up, a pledge, a seal, an anointing, and seed (John 4:14; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 John 3:9). Furthermore, this grace does not differ really from the habit of charity by which we love God. For through the love of God, or rather by faith working through love, we are given spiritual life, that is, we become children and friends of God (Galatians 3:26; 5:6; John 14:21; 1 John 3:1-2, 4:7-8).

Censure: The primary meaning of justifying and saving grace must refer to God's active charity towards us, that is, His mercy, and not to our charity towards God (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:4-5; 1 John 4:9-10). Although there is a certain habitual

grace in the regenerate, called active charity or living faith, through which the faithful are pleasing to God in Christ, the principal foundation of our friendship with God lies not in such a habit, but in God's mercy. As for the statements supporting the former view, they do not concern the passive charity of God, by which He is loved by us, but rather His active charity, by which He loves us. That grace is said to be poured into our hearts due to the sense and knowledge of it, and it is compared to created things because of its sweetness. The arguments supporting the latter view do not prove that habitual sanctity is the form of justification or formal righteousness by which we are deemed just before God, but only prove that there is habitual grace or sanctity in the regenerate, which indeed pleases God. Therefore, justification and sanctification are confused.

CONTROVERSY II

What is to be said about Sufficient and Efficacious Grace?

Bellarmin: Sufficient grace is entirely different from efficacious grace, and efficacious grace does not depend on our assent and cooperation, but on the secret persuasion and drawing of the Father to Christ (John 6:44). Nevertheless, nothing operates in us without us, that is, without our consent and cooperation.

Censure: Common grace is generally offered to all people, both outside and inside the Church. From God's side and with regard to certain circumstances, it is sufficient; but due to human fault, it is only sufficient for leading to a superficial morality unless singular and efficacious grace is added. Therefore, in the elect, sufficient grace is joined with efficacious grace. In the reprobate, sufficient grace is entirely separate from efficacious grace. Furthermore, Bellarmin's assertion involves a contradiction that is removed if we say that the efficacious grace of God exercises its efficacy in us without any cooperation on our part, in the first moment of conversion. For our cooperation is the effect of that efficacious grace. Lastly, every person is equipped with sufficient help or necessary aids to avoid sins and to do moral good works; and this sufficient grace is enough for a superficial morality (Romans 1). But because they neglect these aids and therefore misuse the first grace, they are not worthy of the second, and consequently, they are punished. This grace in the Gentiles is the law of nature; in hypocrites, the voice of the Gospel is added to the law of God. Therefore, God communicates grace (taken in the broad sense) sufficiently to all people, but unequally, which must be held against the Pelagians.

CONTROVERSY III

Is Sufficient Grace for Salvation Given to All People?

Bellarmin: God offers sufficient means for salvation. For wisdom invites all (Proverbs 1:20-23). And God does not desire the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11) but

wants all people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10; 2 Peter 3:9). And finally, Christ enlightens every person (John 1:9) and died for all (1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2).

Censure: Indeed, common grace is generally offered to all. It is offered, I say, either in the book of nature (Romans 1:19-20) and is sufficient for superficial morality or in the Church, where even hypocrites are called to salvation through the Gospel; and this call of God is not illusory or hypocritical but serious and ordered toward a salvific end, and on God's part, it is sufficient insofar as He does not use any other means to convert people than those offered to all, and which are ordinarily efficacious in converting the elect. But singular, saving, and efficacious grace is proper to the elect. In this sense, some of the cited passages can be applied to all in general, as many as are called through the Gospel, except those where it deals with God's special grace. In those cases, by all, we must understand all kinds, not all individuals. For those are effectively called by God who are predestined by God, as can be seen from the golden chain of salvation in Romans 8.

CONTROVERSY IV

What Should Be Believed About Predestination?

Consensus: There is no cause for predestination whereby God predestined His elect to grace and glory from our side. It entirely depends on the free and merciful will of God, according to which God leads certain people chosen from the mass of perdition to eternal salvation through infallible means. Therefore, our foreseen faith or piety is not the cause of election (Matthew 11:25-26; Romans 9:10-18; Ephesians 1:4-6). Furthermore, the two parts of reprobation are negative (pretermission) and positive (ordination to punishment). The cause of pretermission is the will of God; the cause of damnation or punishment is the foreseen sin in the person passed over (Romans 9:19-21).

Bellarmin: The reason for predestination lies more in the foreknowledge of God than in His decree. Otherwise, God would be the cause of evil things. Foreknowledge, however, is not the cause of things, but simply observes future events. Furthermore, God predestined His elect not only to grace but also to glory, liberally and gratuitously. However, no one is chosen for glory except through foreseen merits, whether good works.

Censure: Foreknowledge should not be opposed to the decree because foreknowledge and predestination are two acts of the decree. Furthermore, God's foreknowledge can be either theoretical or practical. Theoretical foreknowledge is not the cause of things, for God even knows evil things, and He foreknows many possible things that will never happen. Hence, Augustine says: "God foreknows all things, of which He is the author, yet He is not the author of all that He foreknows." Practical foreknowledge is the cause of things: it efficiently causes good things, permits evil things, and governs both good and

evil. Thirdly, God's decree is the efficient cause of all good things in an absolute sense and with respect to quality, action, and order. However, He does not cause evil things but permits and directs them. Fourthly, it involves a contradiction to say that God chose some people absolutely freely and generously and yet chose no one for glory except through foreseen merits. For merit, properly speaking, and the grace of God are perpetually at odds (Romans 3:27-28; 4:4-5).

CONTROVERSY V

Is Human Free Will Truly Free?

Bellarmin: Free will is free not only from coercion but also from all other necessity. Otherwise, even animals would have free will, as they act spontaneously and without coercion.

Censure: Necessity can be internal or external. Internal necessity is natural and does not contradict free will. For example, a person naturally desires the end goal necessarily, and yet freely, that is, not coercively. External necessity is either coercion or a miserable condition. The former is completely excluded from free will; the latter is called an adventitious or calamity-related necessity acquired over sin, which does not remove natural indifference. For example, a person sins freely and necessarily—freely, as they are not forced; necessarily, as, given the hypothesis of original sin, they necessarily sin, though not under the hypothesis of nature. Therefore, free will is not entirely free from all necessity. Moreover, there cannot be free will in animals because they are not voluntary causes but natural causes, acting by the instinct of nature.

CONTROVERSY VI

Is Free Will a Purely Active Power?

Bellarmin: Free will is not merely a passive power nor partly passive and partly active, but entirely and absolutely active. It is neither affected by the imagination, the known object, nor the intellect. With all these being present, it is still free to act or not.

Censure: Free will is partly active and partly passive. It is active as it moves and acts; passive as it is moved and acted upon. It is moved by God, internal affections, passions, temptations, the intellect, and the quality of the object, as everyone can acknowledge from experience. Therefore, it cannot be called a purely active power.

CONTROVERSY VII

Is Free Will Free Concerning Both Present and Future Actions?

Bellarmin: Free will is free regarding both present and future actions. For it is not coerced.

Censure: Present things are necessary and do not fall under deliberation any more than past things. Therefore, they do not fall under free will. This is called necessity based on the hypothesis of time, whether past or present. When, therefore, the will wills something, by that very fact, it necessarily wills it. Nevertheless, this is not a necessity of coercion. Thus, it can be said that free will relates even to present things. But it is false to say, as Bellarmin does, that free will is equally free concerning present and future things since present things are more necessary than future things.

CONTROVERSY VIII

Can Free Will Be Called Servile?

Bellarmin: Free will cannot be called servile without significant temerity, however one may explain this phrase because it always implies a contradiction.

Censure: Kindly words, please. For from John 8:34, it is clear that free will is called servile concerning a person who is not yet reborn but is still under the dominion of sin.

CONTROVERSY IX

Do We Have Many Doctrinal Points in Common with the Papists on Free Will?

Bellarmin: There are few things in common here.

Orthodox View: There are many things in common, especially philosophical and some theological points, provided that there is no quarrel over words and that some phrases are properly explained. Bellarmin has often invented controversies to enlarge and increase the volume of his book or at least to make our cause seem odious. However, the consensus of the parties is contained in three theses.

1. There are three types of liberty: natural, grace, and glory. The first concerns humans as humans; the second concerns Christian soldiers; the third concerns triumphant Christians.
2. Free will in a person should be considered according to their four states: creation, corruption, redemption, and glorification. In the first state, humans had natural liberty; in the second, they have a significantly weakened liberty; in the third, they have a healed liberty through grace; in the fourth, they have liberty with glory. The main controversies here concern the state of sin.
3. The object of free will is threefold: natural actions, human actions, and spiritual actions. Natural actions are common to humans and animals, such as eating, sleeping, and hearing. In these, humans have free will after the fall. Human actions are those attributed to humans as humans, such as logical actions (reasoning), ethical and moral actions (pursuing virtue), political and civil actions (governing), ecclesiastical actions (coming to the temple, preaching, and hearing the word of God), and mechanical actions (building). In all these, humans also

have free will after the fall (Romans 2:14). Nevertheless, the will is subject to divine governance (Jeremiah 10:23). This liberty, as orthodox theologians rightly teach, is not perfect because human powers have been significantly weakened by the fall, and various obstacles occur. Spiritual actions pertain to the conscience and concern the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of God. Those actions related to the kingdom of darkness are called sins. In these, humans have free will. Concerning actions related to the kingdom of God, such as faith and new obedience, humans also have free will, even in the first moment of conversion, insofar as the will desires what God desires. No one is converted in ignorance or unwillingly. To this extent, we agree.

CONTROVERSY X

Can Moral Truth Be Known Without the Special Aid of God?

Orthodox View: Without the special aid of God, humans can know practical or moral truth, that is, the distinction between right and wrong. However, this knowledge is uncertain and does not please God in itself. For human reason is so corrupted that without the special aid of God, it cannot know moral truth in such a way as not to err.

Bellarmin: No special divine aid is needed to know moral truth in all its circumstances (for example, what works are commanded by God and how they should be rightly fulfilled), but general aid suffices. For reprobates have done morally good works (Romans 1:19-20). Therefore, they also knew these things. And indeed, moral truth is the object of the intellect. Therefore, it can be known without special divine aid. This is supported by the noble sayings and deeds of many pagans.

Censure: The argument deviates from the question. For the arguments presented prove that the impious have some knowledge of God's will insofar as they are human beings endowed with the light of nature. But the question is whether this knowledge is certain and distinct without special divine aid. If some pagans have spoken more saintly things and lived more piously than the common lot, these extraordinary gifts should be attributed to God. For such gifts often happened to pagans.

CONTROVERSY XI

Is Free Will Perfect in Moral Actions?

Orthodox View: Humans can do nothing that is morally good before God perfectly, without the special aid of God. Therefore, theologians rightly teach that the powers of free will are null and void without the general or special aid of God, whether in earthly or heavenly matters, either in this life before or after the fall, or after this life.

Bellarmin: Unregenerate people, by the strength of their own nature, without special divine aid, can perform a moral good so perfectly that it does not contain any sin,

provided they are not pressed by some severe temptation. Hence, it follows that the entire law of God can be perfectly observed in substance without the aid of grace.

Confirmation of the Thesis: 1. Unbelievers before conversion are bad trees (Matthew 7:17-18; 12:33). Therefore, they cannot do anything truly good. Compare Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-18, where humans are said to be dead in sins and Gentiles are said to walk in vanity and have their understanding darkened. 2. We receive all good things from God (1 Corinthians 4:7). And God works in us both to will and to do (Philippians 2:13). Therefore, there are no powers of our own free will for good, unless God provides them from His special grace.

Confirmation of the Antithesis: 1. God rewards certain works of the Gentiles (Exodus 1:20-21; Ezekiel 29:18-20; Daniel 4:27). Therefore, He does not regard them as morally bad since He does not approve of evil. 2. The pagans in Matthew 5:46 are said to love their friends. And in Romans 2:14, they are said to do by nature what the law requires. 3. The Scriptures give legal precepts to humans (Exodus 20). They are not given in vain. 4. God says it is up to humans not to act righteously, for example, because they do not want to (Isaiah 5:1-4; Jeremiah 7:13-15; 32:33; Matthew 23:37; Acts 7:51). 5. The precept of God is not far off but near (Deuteronomy 30:11-14), where God also says He has set before them life and death. 6. In Joshua 24:15, the Israelites are given the choice of which God they will serve. 7. If unbelievers truly sin by giving alms, praying, and teaching others, they should be deterred from these works. 8. Unless human free will is thus free in moral actions, there will be no place for virtue, vice, rewards, punishments, counsels, exhortations, commands, promises, etc. 9. All requirements of good works are present in the good works of some unbelievers: namely, form (a good action commanded by the law), the intention of a good end (the glory of God), and the work being proportionate to human will. 10. Fifty fathers testify to the same.

Antidote: 1. From any temporal reward, it does not follow that some work is perfectly pleasing to God. 2. Not every kind of love for friends or other works of the law is immediately perfectly good before God. It requires perfection in parts and degrees, which cannot be attributed to good works. 3. Divine precepts show what we owe, not what we can do. Therefore, they have a use among those who, through their own fault, have become slaves to sin. Moreover, divine precepts stir up our sluggishness. 4. Indeed, it is up to humans not to act rightly because they do not rightly use the first grace. 5. There, Moses speaks of the Israelites to whom the divine law was clearly presented. 6. The same answer applies. Here, the liberty of grace is confused with the liberty of nature. 7. Unbelievers do not sin by performing these external works but by not fully paying the due. Moreover, the works themselves are not to be forbidden because of the adjunct human vice. 8. Precepts, counsels, exhortations, reprimands, and promises do not lose their use among those who have, through their own fault, become debtors and who have, moreover, sufficient divine help. 9. The chief requisites are omitted: namely, the legitimate form and faith. Furthermore, the good intention there is not sincere, as the Gentiles almost always sought their own glory. 10. The sayings of the Fathers are to

be understood either of the liberty of nature, the liberty of grace, or finally of political matters, which are good as to the external form.

CONTROVERSY XII

What is the Nature of Free Will in Spiritual Matters?

Orthodox View: Free will in spiritual matters can do absolutely nothing by itself but obtains all its power and ability to act rightly from divine grace. Therefore, humans are compared to the dead, such that they cannot will or do anything spiritually good unless God precedes and gives them new life. But when a person is thus quickened by God, then the will begins to desire what is good, precisely in that instant in which God infuses His grace through His Spirit. Hence, it follows that in the first moment of conversion, a person is not like a trunk, a log, or a stone, necessarily entirely passive or merely a passive instrument, that is, doing nothing, but is thus preceded by God that they may freely act as an agent. However, in the first act of conversion, there is no cooperation.

Antithesis: Even in spiritual actions, faith, and new obedience, free will can do nothing without special divine grace. Yet, being excited by divine grace, it acts so that it can also not act. Thus, here, it is not merely passive but also active and freely cooperates or concurs with this divine grace. Hence, the sinner is rightly compared to a prisoner who is bound and invalid but still breathing so that when the chains are loosed, he can walk out of the prison. Moreover, exciting grace is not given to us without our action and preparation.

Confirmation of the Thesis: 1. We are dead in sins (Colossians 2:13). Compare Genesis 6:3; Romans 8:7-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14 and other passages that speak of our misery. 2. God creates a new heart in us; He draws us and causes us to will and to act (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 6:44-45; Philippians 1:29; 2:13). 3. The judgment of the primitive Church supports this view, as Augustine says: "Everything is owed to God, who prepares the will to be aided and aids it when prepared." The same author says: "The will of those who can act is inflamed by the Holy Spirit because they wish to do so because God works in them to will it." 4. Reason teaches that prevenient and exciting grace operates in a person without them and that a person thus preceded and excited truly experiences this action.

Confirmation of the Antithesis: 1. The Scriptures call us workers and fellow workers with God in the work of salvation (Matthew 20:1-16; 1 Corinthians 3:9). Therefore, we are not merely passive instruments. 2. God commands people to believe, to convert themselves to Him, to make a new heart, to put off the old man and put on the new, and to work out their salvation (Zechariah 1:3; Joel 2:12-13; Jeremiah 4:3-4; Isaiah 1:16-17; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 2:12; John 6:29). Therefore, all these things are in our power. For it is in vain to command something to a stone. 3. Everywhere, it is said that God aids people in the works of piety (Psalm 27:14; 30:5; Romans 8:26; 1 Corinthians

15:10). 4. God often calls people, yet they do not come but resist the Holy Spirit (Proverbs 1:24; Matthew 23:37; Acts 7:51). 5. The Fathers teach the same. 6. Reason persuades us. For if humans do not have free will, they sin necessarily and, therefore, should not be punished. Thus, all use of exhortations, reprimands, and efforts towards good works is removed. Nor should those who wish to believe and repent be praised, nor those who refuse to do so be blamed, just as those who do not work miracles or do not prophesy should not be blamed, as these depend only on the grace of God.

Antidote: 1. This is a misinterpretation of the argument. The question is not whether we are like stones in the first conversion. Moreover, we are called workers and fellow workers with God concerning cooperating grace, not operating grace. Thirdly, a person is said to act in the first act of conversion insofar as they do not resist. 2. The inference from the command to the ability to fulfill it is not valid. Moreover, we can do these things, but only when excited by grace. For when God commands in the Gospel to believe, He also gives the will and ability. 3. God aids the person who has been excited. Therefore, these things should be understood concerning cooperating grace. 4. Indeed, this is the liberty of the corrupted nature to reject the offered grace. 5. The conditional proposition does not show the natural powers of free will but indicates the powers given by God, as the very subject matter suggests. 6. The Fathers mean by this that it is up to us to will or not to will in the first conversion, but it is up to God that we will rightly. 7. A person is rightly punished because, although they cannot do anything but sin by themselves, they are still to blame. Moreover, the use of exhortations, etc., is not lost among those who have sufficient divine help. Thirdly, those who ascribe the beginning, middle, and end of salvation solely to God will not seek an occasion for laziness from this but will entirely trust in the grace of God, despairing of themselves, and will, being aided by grace, cooperate with it so that they may not appear to have neglected it and their salvation. Finally, those who thus cooperate with God's grace are to be praised, but those who reject the exciting grace grievously sin and are therefore to be blamed.